

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the preceding amendments and following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-9 are pending in this application. Claim 1 is amended and no claims have been added or cancelled. Claim 1 is the sole independent claim.

Interview Summary

The Examiner and Erin G. Hoffman discussed claim 1 in a telephonic interview on December 12, 2006. It is Applicant's understanding (based on that discussion) that amending claim 1 as shown in the section below will adequately address the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Applicant and the undersigned thank the Examiner for her courtesy.

Rejections under 35 USC § 103

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishina et al (U.S. 5,503,964) in view of JP10-189541. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for the reasons detailed below.

Independent claim 1 recites "a gas processing step, wherein selected reaction gas **including** **N₂/H₂** is introduced into a reaction chamber". Example non-limiting embodiments of this feature are discussed, for example, in Table 1 of the instant specification.

Nishina, as relied upon by the Examiner, fails to suggest a gas processing step, wherein selected reaction gas **including** **N₂/H₂** is introduced into a reaction chamber as recited in independent claim 1.

After a thorough search, Applicants can not find a disclosure in Nishima of even a gas processing step, much less a gas processing step wherein a selected reaction gas including N₂/H₂

is introduced into a reaction chamber. In addition, referring to the September 22, 2006 Office Action, the Examiner also fails to point out a gas processing step disclosed in Nishima. Therefore, Nishima fails to teach or suggest “a gas processing step, wherein selected reaction gas including N₂/H₂ is introduced into a reaction chamber” as recited in independent claim 1.

The abstract of JP-10189541 teaches removing a resist film by oxygen gas or the like. Even if this step could be considered a gas processing step, JP-10189541 disclosed using oxygen gas rather than a reaction gas including N₂/H₂ as recited in independent claim 1. Therefore, JP-10189541 also fails to teach or suggest “a gas processing step, wherein selected reaction gas including N₂/H₂ is introduced into a reaction chamber” as recited in independent claim 1.

Because neither Nishina nor JP-10189541 teaches introducing a selected reaction gas including N₂/H₂ into a reaction chamber as recited in independent claim 1, the alleged combination of Nishina and JP-10189541 also cannot teach “a gas processing step, wherein selected reaction gas including N₂/H₂ is introduced into a reaction chamber” as recited in independent claim 1.

The Applicants, therefore, respectfully request that the rejection to Claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

Claims 2-9, dependent on independent claim 1, are patentable for the reasons stated above with respect to claim 1 as well as for their own merits.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection to independent claim 1 and all claims dependent thereon.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above remarks and amendments, the Applicants respectfully submit that each of the pending objections and rejections has been addressed and overcome, placing the present application in condition for allowance. A notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicant(s) hereby petition(s) for a one (1) month extension of time for filing a reply to the outstanding Office Action and submit the required \$60.00 (small-entity) extension fee herewith.

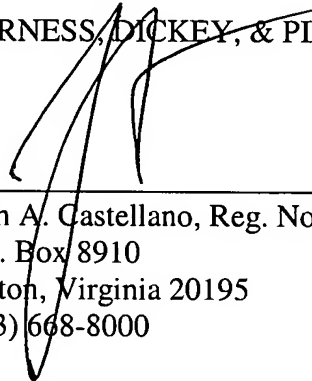
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Erin G. Hoffman, Reg. No. 57,752, at the telephone number of the undersigned below.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 08-0750 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

HARNESS, DICKEY, & PIERCE, P.L.C.

By



John A. Castellano, Reg. No. 35,094
P.O. Box 8910
Reston, Virginia 20195
(703) 668-8000

JAC/EGH:ald